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RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0221
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1388
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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C AND AF/PD, LONDON
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SUBJECT: CHAD'S ARCHBISHOP GIVES STARK
ANALYSIS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: There is no hope for a dialogue on Chad's political future as long as President Deby remains in power, according to Chad's influential Archbishop. In a meeting with the Ambassador on May 17, the religious expressed his view that, although President Deby had more material with which to fight, the rebels still posed a real threat. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On May 17, the Ambassador paid a call on Chad's Catholic Archbishop, Monseigneur Ngarteri Mathias, at the Archbishop's request. Monseigneur Mathias is one of the most senior and well-respected religious figures in Chad. He requested a meeting with the Ambassador in order to discuss the current political situation in Chad, which he views in very bleak terms.

Abuja Peace Accord

¶3. (U) The Ambassador and the Archbishop began their discussion on the topic of the peace accord for Darfur recently signed in Abuja, Nigeria. The Archbishop asked how the Ambassador views the accord, and whether it responds to the wishes of the USG. The Ambassador responded that the accord is the best chance for a lasting peace in the region.

Future of Chad

¶4. (SBU) The Ambassador noted that, while the Abuja accord will help with peace on the Chad-Sudan border, it cannot fully resolve Chad's internal conflict. The Archbishop said that he had wished to test the nationalism of both president Deby Itno and the rebel leaders in the statement released by the Chadian Archdiocese prior to the May 3 elections. [Note: the Archdiocese asked Deby Itno to

postpone the elections, the rebels to put down their arms, and for all parties to sit down at a national round table to dialogue and come to a peaceful political solution. End Note]. The Archbishop said that he "wanted to know if Deby Itno and the rebels were truly willing to dialogue, and what they were willing to give up?" He said that Deby Itno's reply was that he would begin dialogue after elections. However, the Archbishop said, based on his recent declarations to his own party, the MPS, there is now no room left for dialogue. From the Archbishop's perspective, if Deby Itno is a true nationalist and cares about Chad, he must accept a transition based on the results of a national forum/round table.

The Rebels are Coming

15. (SBU) In perhaps the starkest moment of their discussion, the Archbishop voiced his concern that "unless Deby accepts a transition, the rebels are coming, and there will be war in N'Djamena." Asked by the Ambassador whether the rebels pose a real threat, the Archbishop replied that they do. He stated that, although Deby Itno now has more material with which to fight, he still lacks the manpower, that is the backing of a large majority of the Chadian army. He predicted that the rebels will begin their next assault by taking a major town, such as Adre, and holding it as a base. To this, the Ambassador emphasized recent statements from the Embassy and Washington condemning any attempt to take power by force in Chad,

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and encouraging a national dialogue and a more inclusive political process.

National Dialogue?

16. (SBU) The Archbishop emphasized the urgent need to organize a national forum or round table to begin dialogue between the government, opposition, and civil society. However, he said that neither he nor the vast majority of Chadians view Deby Itno as their legitimately elected leader. Therefore, a forum or round table that includes his participation as president is meaningless. He stated that Deby Itno continues to be at the center of Chad's political impasse, for several reasons. First, from the Archbishop's perspective, Deby Itno has not allowed opposition parties to fully and openly participate in the political process, and in fact has actively discouraged their participation through bribes and pay-offs. Second, Deby Itno amended the constitution, against the will of a large majority of Chadians, according to the Archbishop. Third, he refused requests to postpone elections. Fourth, he has consistently refused to dialogue with the armed opposition. Finally, his recent pronouncements to his MPS party indicate his unwillingness to dialogue. These points lead the Archbishop to conclude that, in the current political climate, all doors to dialogue are closed. "Deby is the problem, and we cannot move ahead with him as president," the Archbishop said.

The "Cote d'Ivoire Solution"

17. (SBU) The Ambassador, playing devil's advocate, asked the Archbishop whether, if Deby Itno accepted an opposition government as part of a round table agreement, a peaceful future was possible for Chad during Deby Itno's new five year mandate. The Archbishop replied that neither the "Cote d'Ivoire solution" nor the "Togo solution"

both cases where African presidents agreed to share power will work in the Chadian context. This for the simple reason that Deby Itno controls the military. A prime minister with strong executive powers would be weak in the face of Deby Itno and his military, the Archbishop said.

18. (SBU) If there is a political solution to the region's problems, the Archbishop said, it must involve a strong U.N. presence on the border, and active and positive roles for both the Government of Sudan and the Arab nations that support Sudan. He also pointed out that Libya has been involved in every major change in power in Chad in recent years, but that perhaps they can be encouraged by the United States to remain neutral, given the recent warming in relations between the two. Finally, the Archbishop emphasized at several points throughout the conversation that nothing can move ahead in Chad without the help of the French. "The French can torpedo any effort to open the political process here," the Archbishop said.

Comment

19. (SBU) The Archbishop's comments express in stark terms the frustrations shared by many in Chad's civil society groups and its political opposition in the aftermath of the May 3 elections. His views show the deep mistrust that must be overcome before Chadians can begin to come to terms with their country's political future.

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